



WINTER A.D. 2016

# The Anglican Digest

VOL. 58 NO. 4



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# The WINTER A.D. 2016 Anglican Digest

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Christ Church  
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# The Anglican Digest

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## FROM THE EDITORS

It seems to me that there are far too many New Year days. January 1 is the obvious one, a convenient moment to commemorate a milestone in our journey from birth to death, or for our nation or clan to step out into what we hope and politicians assure us, will be a bright future. Various moments in late August or September begin new years for teachers, children, judges, and lawyers. Nowadays, we are reminded of such events by our cell phones and online diaries.

Our birthdays signal the beginning of a new chapter in our lives. As with the other commemorations noted above, there's something entirely arbitrary about the system. Nothing really happens that could not be contemplated at another moment in time, and time itself, something we take entirely for granted, is a vastly complicated reality, a little word attempting to express a notion too complex for most of us to contemplate with any acuity. The idea that time flows backwards as well as forwards may be true, but remains beyond my ability to comprehend. I attempt to embrace it when I stand at the altar in my time, and find myself at Calvary and in the Last Days at the heavenly banquet, in God's time.

Most Christians observe Advent Sunday as the start of a new year. Whether we do so with the enthusiasm evinced on New Year's Eve and Day is quite another matter. I have never been to an Advent Eve party. More often than not, the absence of flowers around the altar, the appearance of traditional blue-purple vestments and hangings (or modern blue, if you must!), and

our singing hymns not in more general use, combine to remind us that another season is beginning.

If that's as far as our imagination takes us, perhaps it's far enough — though it's not as far as we really should go, for the season of Advent commemorates a moment in time as significant as the Biblical "days" of Creation. Advent takes us along the Biblical "days" preceding the New Creation. We are reminded of the Fall, the Rainbow Arch, the Abrahamic Covenant, Moses and the Commandments, the lives and words of the prophets, all summed up in that extraordinary cousin John the Baptist.

Unlike all our other commemorations, Advent brings to life our sure hope that the birth of Jesus the God-Man changes the direction toward which the world is spinning, and to which, through baptism, we all journey.

John Wesley said that a sermon was best preached on its thousandth delivery. The repeated story of Advent and Christmas is worth the repetition — no other moments of time approach its significance.

One of my favorite poets, John Betjeman, put it this way, in his poem "Advent 1955":

*For now we feel the world spin round  
On some momentous journey bound –  
Journey to what? to whom? to where?  
The Advent bells call out 'Prepare,  
Your world is journeying to the birth  
Of God made Man for us on earth.'*

So read, enjoy, and do share with your friends. And please note that we are again including book reviews, and this issue includes our review of two excellent guides to the way we worship and lessons we read.

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The cover photographs for this issue are of Christ Church, Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi. Christ Church has been a member of our Parish Partner Plan longer than any other, and we are pleased to recognize it now. You can see more photos, and learn more about the parish, from their website:

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## A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDING BISHOP

My Brothers and Sisters,

I bring you greetings in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I have long been a reader of the Anglican Digest. As a parish priest it was one of my “go to” magazines both for devotional reading and study, and for preparation for preaching.

For theological and spiritual reflection you have been doing for years what online news services now do for news and magazine articles, bringing articles together from a variety of sources into one accessible place.

Your work has helped busy disciples of Jesus continue not simply to be informed about the faith, but to be formed by it.

Thank you for that and may God bless you in this holy work.

Your brother,

+Michael  
XVII Presiding Bishop and Primate  
The Episcopal Church

# THE SALVATION OF ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

THE REV. WILL BROWN

I look forward to the conclusion of Advent each year when, on December 17, my custom is to recite at Evensong the ancient “O Antiphons” at the beginning and end of the Magnificat. The O Antiphons are ancient and beautiful prayers (Boethius alludes to them) which – by a propitious coincidence, or by divine providence, or perhaps by the artifice of the anonymous author of the prayers – if you take the first letter of the Latin word for the messianic title in each antiphon, and you write them out in reverse order, they spell out the short Latin sentence: “Ero cras,” which means, “tomorrow I come.”

The Magnificat antiphon Evensong on Christmas Eve, not a part of the sequence of the “Great O Antiphons,” is nevertheless also extremely beautiful, and each year on Christmas Eve I find myself very moved by it: “Or ever the sun is risen in the heavens, you shall see the King of kings proceeding from the Father, As a bridegroom out of his chamber.”

Christmas Eve, the commemoration by Jesus’ disciples of an event lying mystically at the very center of the universe, the very center of history, made holy-beyond-telling by the coming of the transcendent, eternal, and uncreated God into the middle of his creation, into the middle of human history to save us. This is the night that changed everything for the whole universe, like a cosmic bomb of grace buried at the center of everything. On Christmas Eve, the indissoluble union of God with his creation – a union that had been hidden inside the

womb of the Virgin Mary for nine months – is made visible, dawning over the horizon of God's transcendence and man's expectation, “to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,\* and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

We were in trouble, on a trajectory that led to death and total destruction, helpless against the onslaught of the powers of darkness and death arrayed against us, collectively and individually. To my mind, no one has expressed mankind's desperation better than W. H. Auden in his “Christmas Oratorio,” which I quote almost every year:

The Pilgrim Way has led to the Abyss.  
Was it to meet such grinning evidence  
We left our richly odoured ignorance?  
Was the triumphant answer to be this?  
The Pilgrim Way has led to the Abyss.

We who must die demand a miracle.  
How could the Eternal do a temporal act,  
The Infinite become a finite fact?  
Nothing can save us that is possible:  
We who must die demand a miracle.

A far cry from the Jingle-Bells and the tinsel and the inflatable Santa Clauses that our culture thrusts upon our consciousness – already, I noted this year, toward the end of September Advent is really a time to remember the desperate straits into which humanity had veered, and her correlatively desperate need for a Savior.

By celebrating the mystery of the incarnation, we become aware, we remind ourselves, that God himself has arrived – not merely an emissary from the army of angels who, since the beginning of human history, had been fighting valiantly on man’s behalf, but who had nevertheless been losing ground against the determined onslaught of Satan’s kingdom. At the incarnation, God himself arrives to fight for us, and therefore the angels break forth into singing “Gloria in excelsis Deo!” Luke’s Gospel says that when Jesus was born, “suddenly there was... a multitude of the heavenly army praising God and saying, ‘glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!’” (Luke 2.13-14).

But as with so many of the mysteries of our faith, there is a disjunction in all of this. God himself has come among us! The angels break forth in a song of victory! The powers of death and hell are shaken! And what is it like? It is like a newborn, lying in the straw. Yet in truth, this is Emanuel: God with us. This is God’s victory and our salvation.

We speak in lofty terms about the salvation of the world to be manifested at Christmas, but what difference does the mystery of the Nativity make for us as individuals? Or, in other words, how may we appropriate this mystery to ourselves? There has for a long time been a devotion to the infant Jesus among catholic-minded Christians. Yet what does devotion to the Lord’s nativity and infancy really mean?

Expounding the French School of Catholic spirituality, Father Pierre Pourat, suggests that we consider, in essence, what it meant for the eternal Word of God to become a newborn

babe – that is, what humility and abnegation is demonstrated by God's Son in this most improbable of condescensions. And the magnitude of this humility is truly inconceivable. That is, as Jacques Derrida put it: "...this becoming... Nothing – that is what appears impossible, more than impossible [less than nothing, something other than something], the most impossible possible, more impossible than the impossible if the impossible is the simple negative modality of the possible," (from *Sauf le Nom*). In the Christmas Crib, the infinite has become a finite fact.

But Father Pourat (quoting M. de Renty) says:

The infancy of our Lord is a state in which we must die to all and in which the soul waits for and receives orders from God in faith, silence, and respect, in innocence, purity, and simplicity, and lives day by day in abandonment, looking in a manner neither before nor behind; but uniting with the holy Child Jesus who, dead to himself, receives every order from his Father.... We must... as it seems to me, follow these footprints of Jesus Christ our model by the grace of his infancy.

We must ask our Lord, at every time, but especially at Christmas time, "to fill us with the spirit of his holy Childhood." This is the spirit needed by the Christian. Did not the Saviour say: "[Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven]"? The virtues of the state of Christian infancy are in fact, indispensable to those who wish to belong truly to God. It is first of all the renunciation of our own spirit.

and the total abandonment of self to Jesus in order to let ourselves be led by him, like a child who surrenders itself in all that concerns it to those who have charge of it. Furthermore, these virtues are those which call to mind the special characteristics of the child, complete indifference, simplicity, purity, sweetness, and meekness, and finally innocence.

As we consider the near approach of Advent, our word to ourselves ought to be, together with the Shepherds: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." But we ought also to look at it with the eyes of faith and devotion, asking the Lord to make us like his Mother in our love for him, and like himself in our willingness to become as he is, even in his holy infancy, allowing ourselves to be saved by the incomprehensible humility of God.

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## GETTING BELOW TO LIFT UP

THE REV. TOBIAS STANISLAS  
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*“He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.” (Philippians 2:7)*

It is a shock to hear Paul’s words about Christ’s Incarnation: that he became a slave. To apply that word to Jesus Christ sounds scandalous. And it is. This is the scandal of the Incarnation: that the Son of God took that step down, down to the very bottom. It is not simply that the word was made flesh, that God became a human being, but that the Son of God became – among human beings – not the highest, not a king or an emperor, but the lowest and the humblest, one not even considered human by many: a slave, treated as you or I might treat one of our appliances, something bought and paid for, valued

while serviceable but dumped out on the sidewalk for collection by Sanitation when it is of no further use. A slave is one with no control over his or her own life, one placed at our mercy – one who placed himself into the hands of fallen humanity – our hands. At his final meal, Jesus knew that his hour had come, that he was about to be betrayed into human hands by human hands, the very hands that would dip in the bowl with his. Believe me, you don’t want to fall into human hands.

But, as they say in the TV ads, “There’s more!” Jesus would go beyond the mere humility of a servant, even the humiliation of a slave. As the old language of the Apostles’ Creed said so bluntly, “He descended into hell.”

Paul describes the process step-by-step in Philippians. The ladder of humility led from the right hand of God

to humanity (just below the angels), to the slavery that so distorts human beings that they are no longer seen as human beings, even by themselves, and then to that final step of death, where being – human or otherwise – altogether ceases. Jesus voluntarily takes these steps, even the final step into the abyss of non-being, the step into death, even death on the cross – for us.

And this is the glory of the cross: that the cross which marks the lowest point to which the Son would descend – that it should be the very means by which the Son would be lifted up, and draw the whole world to himself. This is the glory of the cross: that the abyss of death into which he was willing to descend should be forever patched and sealed by two beams of wood laid crosswise. The cross is the mark of par-

adox: that He who Is should cease to be; that the death of one should bring life to all; that the slavery of one should bring freedom to all; that the highest should become the lowest. Only from that lowest point – only from the grave, the pit of death and hell – could Christ in rising again bring all of humanity back up with him from the grave. Only by getting completely under the burden of fallen human nature could Christ rescue, lift and carry it up. Only by descending to the grave, the place of non-being, only from that lowest point, could he place the lever of the cross against the fulcrum of his death, and raise up a fallen world. Only from death could Jesus raise us to life.

And all the while the means of this great miracle, the means of our salvation, the cross, stands in our churches, is worn about our necks, representations in wood and silver

and gold never once touched with blood as was the great original. These are representations of the ladder on which the Son of God climbed down from heaven so he could be lifted up on earth, and bring the whole world to himself. This is the instrument by which a slave was revealed as the king in disguise; the one deemed no longer human, revealed to be humanity in perfection. This is the tool by which Christ, who took a slave's form in order to bring freedom, died to rescue us, so that we might live again with him after our own deaths.

We are called to lift high that cross, our standard and our rallying point, the sign of victory in the midst of seeming defeat, the crossbeams that seal the portals of death, the lever the lifts a fallen world, the ladder of salvation, and its sign. We have been rescued, and bear that sign, so that we too can confront a world

enslaved by riches that cannot make one free; to a world that cheapens human nature through injustice, that enslaves the children of God and binds them in chains of hate and pain; to a world that is hungry for the good news of Christ but doesn't know bread from heaven when it sees it; to a world that is dying of thirst while fountains of grace pour from the wounded side of the Lord of glory. Let us always bear that sign of weakness in knowledge of its true strength: in the power of the Spirit let us lift high the cross upon which he was lifted up, to draw the whole world to himself.

The son of God became man to enable men to become the sons of God.

— C. S. Lewis

# THE GOOD NEWS IS LOVE

THE REV. SHERRY BLACK

In Eric Metaxes' recent biography, Bonhoeffer, he says that "[Dietrich Bonhoeffer] had once told a student that every sermon must contain 'a shot of heresy,' meaning that to express the truth, we must sometimes overstate something or say something in a way that will sound heretical – though it must certainly not be heretical" (364).

I believe this is true, that on any given Sunday, our homilies reflects only a facet of the gospel, overemphasized, overstated; hopefully people who show up week after week will eventually hear a fully balanced presentation of gospel message in our messages. And yet, I also believe that between the Ministry of the Word and the Ministry of the Sacrament, in the Communion message

of our Eucharistic Prayers, we do hear the entire gospel, the good news, every single week.

Shortly after I graduated from seminary, I was involved with an on-line discussion group conversing about how to express the gospel – in a brief but thorough and catholic message. My first thought, and my present thought, is that the best concise encapsulation of the good news is found in our Eucharistic prayer:

*Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.*

The preexistent and infinite love of the Holy Trinity, present at creation, already complete in love and mutual delight, decided to share that love and created us. Even after Adam and Eve were turned out of the Garden, and throughout Abraham's life in Genesis, God was making a way for love and relationship. "I will be your God, and you will be my people."

As God's people wandered near and far both geographically and spiritually, God loved them. It was impossible for God, because of love and goodness, to do anything else but make a way for relationship.

And so, because of love, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe became a creature. The Son, in relationship with the Father, anointed by the Holy Spirit, came to fulfill God's promise of relationship in a way that had not been

possible before. In his book Miracles, C. S. Lewis describes the rescue operation like this:

*He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world with Him. Once has the picture of a strong man stooping lower and lower to get himself underneath some great complicated burden. He must stoop in order to lift, he must almost disappear under the load before he incredibly straightens his back and marches off with the whole mass swaying on his shoulders.*

God descends and then ascends in the Son: death and resurrection. And that is essential: to die to self, to live in Christ, reconciled into the loving embrace of the Trinity. While this is accomplished at our baptism, this is not a once-and-for-all action. We have been saved, we are being saved, we will be saved as we carry the cross which is our life. A life of surrender,

of loss, of grief and heartache, through which we grow closer to and more dependent upon the grace and love of the God-head, letting go of the things which we allow to hinder us in our relationship with God, loosing our clenched fists which are clamped tight on illusions, on things over which we ultimately have no control. I'm reminded of a story that I've found in numerous internet sources, about a little girl who falls in love with dime-store pearls, and does extra chores and saves her money until she finally has enough to buy them: \$1.95. She loves her pearls and wears them everywhere. They are her greatest and most prized possession. One night her daddy asks if she would give him her pearls – and she says, "No Daddy, not my pearls" and offers another toy instead. A few nights later he asks again, and again she says no, again offering another valued possession. "That's okay, daddy loves you." A few

nights later Daddy finds the girl crying on her bed, pearls in hand, and she hands those cheap plastic pearls to her daddy. "They are for you." Her daddy reaches into his pocket and pulls out a blue velvet box — inside was a string of genuine pearls.

Because of love, God too is wanting to give us beautiful things, life and love, and here we are, holding on to cheap imitations.

Through it all God loves us more than we can possibly imagine, just as we are, clenched fists and all; in our messy lives in which we spend too much time trying to fix ourselves, to make ourselves presentable to God. God loves us! Out of love God sent Jesus to show us what love looks like in Christ's death on the cross, that we too might be raised again. For us too, love is the willingness to lay down our life for our friends and neigh-

bors, to turn the other cheek, to sacrifice our lives – for justice, for fairness, for equality, for love and for peace.

*Advent tells us to be prepared: be prepared for any adversity, and be prepared for our Lord's return, when God remakes the entire world. To be prepared is to be in a living relationship with the living God who was born in a stable, mounted the arms of the cross, and defeated the powers of death. Dwell in that love.*

— The Rt. Rev. Edward  
L. Salmon, Jr.

## ON HOLY INNOCENTS

THE REV. DAVID MOWERS

Sometime after my conversion to Anglicanism as a young adult, I became aware of the Feast of the Holy Innocents. I was attracted to Anglican observance of the church calendar, and one day fell down an internet rabbit hole reading about all sorts of lesser observances. I read that Holy Innocents was on December 28, and commemorated the infants killed by Herod in Matthew's account of the Nativity. Still, any reason for holding public services to observe this feast eluded me until last Christmas, when I noticed a parish offering a worship service to "hold up to God children, in their own or others' lives, who had passed away at any age or stage of development."

I suspect that for most of us, thinking about children who

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have died at Christmas time is not the sweetly sentimental Christmas observance that most of us would want. But then again, for those people who have lost children, or lost children before birth, perhaps the children who are not there at Christmas is all they can think about. Either way, the observance of Holy Innocents jars us; it is the needle of the turntable scratching its way across the vinyl of our consciences.

It feels especially jarring for me this year. A friend from high school recently became pregnant through fertility treatments after a number of attempts, but after a life-threatening problem forced her into labor at 26 weeks and both twins died after just after birth. A distant relative has a lovely eighteen-month-old daughter who was diagnosed shortly after her first birthday with Gaucher's Disease, a terminal

cellular disorder; she is not now expected to live to see her fourth birthday. As I was writing this, the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* ran a story of a double homicide in South Minneapolis whose victims were killed while sitting in a car – a twenty-year-old man, and an eight-month-old baby who was strapped into his car seat. I know a number of couples who have experienced a miscarriage over the last year. And finally, like most people, I have seen pictures of Syrian children that I cannot now erase from memory.

Our culture tempts us to a Christmas celebration that simply glosses over the tragedies that befall so many, both locally and far away. We don't want to think about these things happening to anyone, much less to our own children – a thought scary enough to bring any parent up short. But papering over tragedy isn't a winning strategy for those

who have lost children and can't help but remembering them, and it isn't a remedy for anyone who wants Christmas to be bigger than mere clichéd sappiness – something more than Santa Claus and mistletoe, Bing Crosby and family gatherings where we ignore all difficulties for the sake of getting along. The world that Jesus comes into in the Nativity is a world that is blind to its own need. And so the church calendar unwittingly, in the midst of Christmastide, forces us to testify that the world of Christmas movies is simply a veneer, and that we are beset and surrounded by tragedy.

Holy Innocents calls us to a Christmastide that rejects sentimental clichés, and instead remembers the deepest wounds and most enduring losses in our lives and, in so doing, offers us the hope of the child in the manger. We gather together not as a part of an antiquarian lesser feast

known only to church nerds, but as a community of solidarity, so that those who walk in darkness might know the manger light. We gather to testify that there is no loss which cuts us off from the love of God in Jesus Christ. We offer the support of a people who remember how bleak our world is and how desperately we each need to be delivered by the One delivered from the Virgin Womb. And we trust that somehow, in this mystery, Word and Sacrament can speak healing into broken hearts.

When we gather as a community to remember these lost children, we bear witness to the power of Christmas to bring healing to the worst this world has to throw at us. That healing, of course, has no timetable or schedule, and in many cases the losses we incur are ones that we will never get over. And yet, people find a way to bear themselves up

and keep on living. No one is helped in this process by a brand of Christian faith that simply worships the God of popular American devotion, that does not engage with the depth of people's loss, or that rejects asking the questions such losses can provoke. But the kind of faith that can hold the tension between the joy of Christmas and the darkness of Holy Innocents – that is a kind of Christian proclamation that can aid healing from even the greatest losses. This is the kind of faith that I pray God might someday help me to reach, and it is to that kind of faith I pray my preaching bears witness.

And so we navigate the tension between Christmas and Holy Innocents. In situations where we can only see suffering and grief, the Light of the Nativity is a beacon drawing us to the comfort of Christmas, to pilgrimage to the beachhead of God's rescue

mission into our world, to see the child in whom all our losses are redeemed, on whom all our burdens are cast, with whom we yearn for the consummation of this rescue.

*It is no good, as some people do, saying "I like Jesus, but I don't like the Church." Quite clearly, Jesus had in mind a body of his disciples going out to the world in its need. The Church is made up of sinful men and women, people who fail like the rest of us, trying to be loyal to our Heavenly Father, trying to be true to him and bear his message to the world in a rescue operation. So it is not "my Father" but "our Father", the Father of the family, the Church.*

*– The Most Rev. Donald Coggan, 101st Archbishop of Canterbury*

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# PAST / PRESENT / FUTURE – THE DANCE OF LIFE

THE REV. BUD HOLLAND

This is the dance of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. We remember the past, stay alert to the present, and move to the future with hope and promise. In all of this, God continues to want to work through us to bring reconciliation, forgiveness, healing, wholeness, and love to a world despairing in need of these initiatives. We can do this seemingly impossible work because God closes the distance between us, e.g. God's great rescue operation. We do this work through remembering, being reminded, and open to be surprised that what seems to be insignificant or minute can be the occasion and birthing of new life and hope in our hearts and in those of others.

I am a “living in the present”

person. I like to discover the extraordinary in what seems to be ordinary — and, alas, find that the ordinary is extraordinary. This finds expression in my photography. Of course, I do not always know it fully in the present moment, but upon reflection, the realization comes to me more fully. We are kissed by the past and beckoned by the future as we live in the present, which in a nanosecond becomes the past, and also a way of looking for the future. I can look at pictures and stories of time past and seek to recall what was my present moment in that time, and sense yet again how they might inform my journey ahead. One such story was a man who helped me repair my wounded knee, which I had hurt on a fall on a subway platform. I was on my way to meet a colleague at a hotel in NYC for breakfast. I arrived at the hotel with torn pants and a bloody knee from the fall.

When I waited in the lobby for him he appeared not from the elevators leading up to the hotel rooms but rather from the front door. He saw me and said: Did you get my message that I cannot meet this morning? I replied, No I didn't. He said he was sorry we could not connect and I understood. As he walked away I said to myself: Why did I not check my voice mail? Then I began to remember all the helpful people that morning that came to my aid on that subway platform. Perhaps those were the meetings I needed to have that day. So life is something like that. What we expect or wish for does not come to pass, but what substitutes for our expectations and wishes far surpasses them. The present moments in our lives are often filled with surprises.

So how might we relate to the past and the future in our present moments? Søren Kierkegaard reportedly once

said that we understand ourselves by looking backward, but we live our life by looking forward. In our Anglican tradition, we identify three sources of authority: Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. From Scripture and Tradition we mine the wisdom of the past that also points to our lives now and our future hope. We also use our reason to see how these insights and truths are indeed truth for us, and discern how we might be embraced by them as we live our lives. Some would also add a fourth source: reflected experience in a community of faith.

We know most fully who we are, whose we are, and who is the "we" that we yearn to be as we wrestle with the texts of our past and come to terms with what those resources might mean for us today and do that work most fully in community. It is from these sources that we wish to shed

some new light on our identity and purpose in life. The program, Education for Ministry, which flows from the Beecken Center of the School of Theology of the University of the South, speaks about four sources: Scripture, Tradition (religious history), Culture, and Personal Positions. It is the weaving together those four sources that we understand most fully who we are and it to those four sources that we bring deep issues of our living in order to weave a mosaic of answers, new questions, and responses to life's persistent questions.

In my own journeys working with individuals and groups I keep hearing nine important questions: who am I, who are you, who are we, who is the we that we yearn to be, whose are we what is our task/vocation/mission in life, how do we proceed, how do we know we are proceeding, and are we there yet? It is those ques-

tions of meaning making and deep engagement in life that calls us to discern the sources of our response for ourselves and suggested to others. These questions are life-long questions which get nuanced and engaged in different ways throughout our stages of life. These are the questions that get re-ignited in thoughts and spirit in Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. God forever closes the distance between God and humankind in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. God does this in a way that maintains our free will to distance ourselves from God and one another.

What seems to be difficult is learning how to balance past/present/future in such a way as to give them each attention without shortchanging the others. In the Anglican tradition we seek to do this each time we celebrate Holy Eucharist. We remember the past in such a way (anamne-

sis) that it becomes both a presence to us and a source of future hope and vision. We recall the night in which Jesus was betrayed and in the process offer and bless the bread and wine at the table believing that Christ is the very essence of them and proclaim those ongoing gifts of God for the people of God. We ask participants in the Eucharist to take them in remembrance that Christ has died for you and feed on Him in your hearts forever. Into this drama of life we come as community. Holy Eucharist is intended to be celebrated in community. We understand who we are in community. This is the spirit of Ubuntu. We who are a people of the context (which we know is very complex) gather intentionally as a people of the gathering (where we seek the strength and wisdom of others), move to become a people of the table (where the vision of life and God's actions in the world cast both an under-

standing of our past and present but also a future reality), and then become a people of the dismissal where we find yet again our identity as a dismissed people — dismissed to go yet again into the contexts of life. It is not so much that we end the service with a dismissal as it is that we are a people of the dismissal. Our work continues. This rhythm of offering, celebrating and living is our dance in life and is made possible by God who is the Lord of the Dance.

On my last trip as a member of the Presiding Bishop's staff, I was helping lead a discussion on employment and benefit issues for lay employees of the Episcopal Church. I headed the Employment Policies and Practices task force, a group who over six years wove together thoughts, reflections, suggestions, critiques, and hopes about lay employment in the Church with the intention of proposing to the Gen-

eral Convention a canonical response that would address these issues and help ensure fairness and justice in our employment of lay workers throughout the Church. This meeting was the last of gatherings of diocesan deputies and provincial leaders before the General Convention of 2009. While at this hotel in Burlingame near to the San Francisco Airport there was also another gathering taking place. It was a conference for people who were blind. I saw young children dancing and hop/skipping and jumping through the hotel lobby on their way outside to catch the breeze and sunlight that awaited. People who were sighted and others who were blind were helping them navigate through that cavernous lobby. The next morning I saw them return and this time I noticed that many of them were wearing t-shirts. On their shirts read these words: I may have lost my sight but

never my vision. I thought to myself: that is it, isn't it. We all have lost our sight on multiple occasions but if we have an internal vision that keeps our spirits buoyed, helps coordinate our pathways from past through present to future that becomes to us a living resource that makes life at its depth and breadth possible. Through my tears on that evening and morning I caught sight of a vision of life and the value of community that will be forever with me. It will be a past memory brought into my present moments and become yet again a source of future hope.

These resources of the past, present, and future can all be crucial and necessary sources of wisdom for our ongoing discussions about our way forward as an Anglican Communion and our place in the broader fabric of other communions, ecumenical relationships, and other faith

traditions. It helps remind us that we are a people of the Incarnation. We remember the incredible gift of God in Jesus, celebrate His continued presence with us, and with the gift of Holy Spirit have the courage and resilience to go yet into the world where all lives matter (the Incarnation declares this) and the welfare and peace of the world including the creation itself awaits. For we, too, have a part in God's rescue plan.

*I myself am very glad the divine child was born in a stable, because my soul is very much like a stable, filled with strange, unsatisfied longings with guilt and animal-like impulses, tormented by anxiety, inadequacy, and pain. If the Holy One could be born in such a place, that One can be born in me also. I am not excluded.*

—Morton Kelsey

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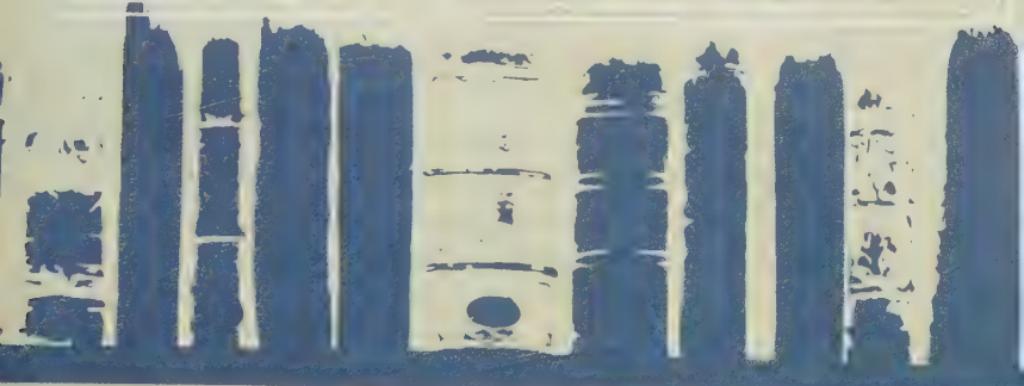
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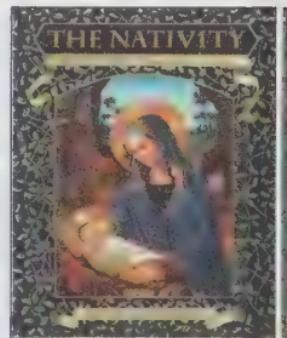
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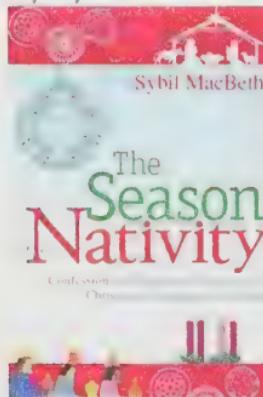
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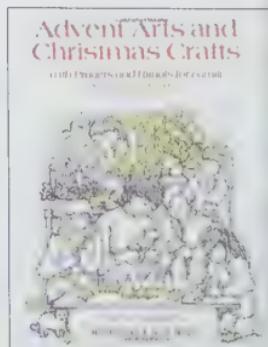
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## A TAD LITERARY — BOOK REVIEWS

Inwardly Digest, Derek Olsen, Forward Movement, 2016

The Path: A Journey Through the Bible, Melody Wilson Shobe & David Creech, Forward Movement, 2016

In former days, three books were to be found in the living rooms of devout Anglican families. From top to bottom, they were the Authorized (King James) version of the Bible, Foxe's "Book of the Martyrs", and the Book of Common Prayer. Nowadays, if these books are to be found at all, they may be on bed stands; Foxe's volume has long lost popularity. Perhaps this is no real loss, for although it portrayed, in lurid prose, the deaths of Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and hundreds more, some notable, some humble, these accounts also fueled centuries of anti-Catholicism

and bigotry. To be inspired by the bravery of the Protestant Martyrs during the reign of the bitter Queen Mary I is no bad thing. It's not inappropriate to consider how unchristian Christians may be when they believe they must protect the Faith, or rid the Church of heretics. On the whole, the book probably did more to create mischief than inspire Anglicans to godliness. This leaves us with two books in our homes, the first the property of all Christians, the second that which distinguishes us as Episcopalians and Anglicans.

In those former days, families gathered for Morning and Evening Prayer each day. They took their Prayer Books with them to church. Often the metrical psalms were included between the bindings of the Prayer Book. Before hymn singing became popular about two hundred years ago, these verse versions of

the psalms were our Church's hymnal, sung to popular tunes accompanied by the village musicians. Praise Bands are nothing new, although the settings to the psalms were perhaps less alarming then. Some of these psalms remain in our hymnals – “O God our help in ages past”, for example.

Nowadays, prayer books, and sometimes even bibles, are provided when we arrive for worship. In many parishes, the entire text of the liturgy, including the appointed lessons, is thrust into our hands when we arrive at church. One of the less salutary aspects of this newer regime is that Prayer Books remain on their shelves, and many people don't even have a copy at home. It may be that much is in the Prayer Book remains unexplored and unfamiliar to many people. Are there Bible readings provided for each day of the year and how do

we find them? Is there a form for Family Prayers? What day does Easter fall on in 2019? How do we discover what Episcopalians believe?

Derek Olsen has provided a guide to the Prayer Book that is accessible, comprehensible, and very reliable. His guide is not merely an attempt to answer our questions; he also seeks to provide a guide to our spiritual life. The word “spirituality” is much used, and often misused. It's wonderful to rediscover our spiritual ancestors' conviction that liturgy shapes our beliefs, the way we speak about God, even the way we speak the language and, most important, the way we live our lives. The way we pray does matter. The more we dive into the Prayer Book, the more we discover ourselves informed, challenged, enlightened, and perhaps even corrected. Derek Olsen has crafted an excellent compendium — one

that is well worth buying and keeping beside our Prayer Books at home.

The Path isn't a commentary; the editors simply provide the reader with sequential extracts from each book of the Bible. Nor is it a replacement for our Bibles. The ambition of the editors is best expressed in their own words. "*The Path: A Journey through the Bible* is an opportunity to walk through the Bible in an easy and accessible format. The Path is the story of the Bible, excerpted and condensed so that it is easier to read. In the pages of this book, we have laid out a clear trail, an easy-to-follow pathway, so that you can journey from one Bible story to the next and see how they connect to each other. As you read through The Path, you will go through all of the major landmarks of the Bible's story — and you will walk in the footsteps of faithful men and women who have done

their best to follow God's call. By reading The Path, you will journey through the Bible step-by-step, experiencing an amazing 360-degree overview of the vast, sweeping story of God's love for ordinary people."

The editors recommend that, if you read the book by yourself, you read through it from beginning to end as you would read a novel. It may also be used for group study. Useful notes and comments are provided to facilitate discussion.

The reviews of these two books began with a journey back in time. In those days devout literate families prayed together and heard God's Word together at home, as a daily habit. Morning and Evening Prayer framed their days. They prepared to receive Holy Communion, not as frequently as we do today, but perhaps with greater devotion and self-examination. Biblical

stories became familiar at an early age as they were heard, read and shared. The collapse of this discipline has compromised our religious lives and weakened the witness of the Church. I heartily recommend both books. Buy them, use them, and give them to your family members, couples with young children, and newly minted Episcopalians. Forward Movement, which has for so long provided us all with daily devotions, has served the church well by publishing both Inwardly Digest and The Path. We recommend you buy and use them.

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*For us, I repeat, not for Himself. Before all time He was born of much nobler birth of the Father. He did not need to be born in time of a mother. Not for the angels, moreover, who because they had Him great did not need Him as a little child. For us, then, He was born, and given to us, because we needed Him.*

— Bernard of Clairvaux

## CHRISTMAS JESUS AND THE GOOD NEWS CHARLIE BROWN

By: THE REVEREND MEGHAN FARR

In the 2006 comedy *Talladega Nights*, comedian Will Ferrell plays a racecar driver by the name of Ricky Bobby. During family meals, Ricky is known for beginning each grace with, “Dear Lord baby Jesus, tiny infant Jesus.” In one scene, his wife interrupts his grace and says, “You know, Jesus did grow up. You don’t always have to call him baby.” To which Ricky replies, “I like the Christmas Jesus best, and I’m the one saying grace. When you say grace, you can say it to grown-up Jesus or teenage Jesus...or whoever you want.” At which point he promptly continues, “Dear 8 pound 6 ounce newborn infant Jesus.” Okay...it’s a little silly but I think hidden in the silliness is a truism: we all, at some time, have a tendency to

like tiny newborn Christmas Jesus, the Jesus of the Holy Family manger scene, best.

We love the manger scene – Mary and Joseph looking lovingly down upon sweet baby Jesus, the shepherds and angels, the star, the animals and the wise men. We've loved it since the year 1223, when Saint Francis first started the tradition of erecting one in churches. Now, mangers are not only in our churches but in our homes, on our lawns and on Christmas cards. We dress children as sheep, donkeys, angels and shepherds for Christmas pageants or live Nativities. What is it about this scene that brings us such nostalgia and emotion? Why do we love Christmas Jesus in the manger best? I think it is because all of us, even those who only walk through the doors of a church on this one day of the year, look upon this scene and find a sense of peace and hope that we think

just might sustain us through another year of dark events and bad news.

But if we really understand what the manger is all about, we come to realize that it is in fact a scene full of good news, the best news. And it isn't just good news heard on one day that we hope might sustain us a few weeks into the new year – it's Good News that is meant to sustain us every day of our lives, no matter how bleak the world seems. The Christmas story is the story of God's great rescue operation. It is the story of God who brings Good News, God who keeps promises, God who is in control of history even when we cannot see it or when the dark news of the world makes it hard to believe. "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

All through the season of Advent, we expect and prepare for Christmas. Yet, it is not simply a sweet story we have been preparing for but a powerful moment in time, full of deepest meaning. We all love Christmas Jesus, but we have to be careful the details of the story don't get so Norman Rockwell-ed and Hallmark-ed that we get distracted by the cuteness of the baby and miss the life-changing message the manger has for us. If Christmas is reduced to a sentimental story about a baby, even Good Friday and Easter are in danger of losing their meaning because, you see, within that manger is also the Cross and Resurrection. The Incarnation is about the coming of God into our world for all people. The Word became flesh. The baby born in Bethlehem was God made man. But the story doesn't stop there, because the baby grows up to be the Savior of the world. This is the Good

News of the manger for all people.

Last year a story from Jason Soroski, a contributor to the devotional magazine *Crosswalk*, made the internet rounds. In the article Soroski talks about a poignant moment from the classic *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. In the movie, Charlie Brown asks if there is anyone who can tell him what Christmas is all about? So, Linus, the character known for the little blue blanket that he is never without, recites the passage from Luke's gospel of the angels announcing the news of Jesus' birth to the shepherds. Soroski tells how it was only very recently that he noticed that when Linus begins reciting the story, he is holding his blanket as usual. But, at the very moment he says the words "Fear not", Linus drops his blanket. Why? Soroski believes in that one simple act, Linus is reminding us that

the birth of Jesus separates us from our fears. It brings us great joy. It brings light into dark places.\*

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined” (Isaiah 9:2). This is the Good News of Christmas that says, even though the world can be a very scary place and it seems difficult to “fear not”, we don’t have to cling to blankets or manger scenes or anything else hoping for security and peace. We cling to Christ, who gives the peace that passes all understanding. “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to God’s people on earth” (Luke 2:14).

When the shepherds heard the angels’ good news of great joy, they went immediately to Bethlehem to see this thing that had taken place – they went to Christ. We too come

to Christ through the Eucharist, and He comes to us – to “cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.” And then, just as the shepherds didn’t remain at the manger but returned, glorying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, we too must go out into the world and proclaim the Good News of the manger, of God’s great rescue operation that is for the whole world. “Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth. Hark, the herald-angels sing glory to the new-born King.” That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown. That’s the good news for Christmas, and every day. Amen.

\*Jason Soroski. “Just Drop the Blanket: The Moment You Never Noticed in Charlie Brown.” Crosswalk.com. 14 Dec. 2015: <http://goo.gl/HbAcjE>

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## CHURCH AND KINGDOM

THE REV. WILLIAM H. RALSTON

Among the many reasons to be thankful for Advent and Lent, those two “preparatory” seasons, is the blazing force of their recollection of what we are. The seasons are designed to prepare us, through humility, for Christmas and Easter, and they do this admirably – but their real substance is the proclamation that we have “another King” and belong to “another Kingdom”, to wean us from our preoccupations with the cities of men for our home in the City of God. When Malcolm Muggeridge reminded the silly students and absurd faculty of the University of Edinburgh that this was the case, they howled in derision and demanded his resignation as University Rector. They can be left to drown in their scotch and their sins. Maybe a few of them have a better understanding now.

Jesus is everywhere of the Word of God Incarnate, whether in His mother's room, in His cradle, at His baptism, in His ministry and preaching, in His passion and cross, in His resurrection and Ascension, or in His rule over time and space as the one through whom all things were made and in whom they will be reconstituted and restored to unity with the Father. Advent and Lent are supremely the seasons of the Word of God.

They therefore have something to tell us about what we are. They tell us that we are at home in another City than the cities of men. In Baptism, we are given the Kingdom of heaven and made “an heir of everlasting salvation”; at the end of Communion, we affirm this in the assurance that we are “heirs through hope of thy everlasting kingdom”. In the two great sacraments, we are reminded that the other place

is our place, where we really belong, where finally we will be “at home”. The Church exists on earth to proclaim this truth in the name of her Lord, in season and out of season. From what other source will this truth be told you? Where else will you be assured of your absolute worth and your destiny to inherit an eternal weight of glory? Who and what else knows for a certainty that you are not an object for anyone’s or anything’s use? You are not an object of any kind, nor a statistic. You are not utilitarian, neither a political object nor a sex object, nor a sociologist’s case study, nor an instant laboratory for psychology or physiology.

And whatever else, you are most certainly not an object for the Church. Her most grievous and terrible betrayal of Christ’s family (His very body, if you will), is when her communicants and His people are treated as ecclesiastical

objects, projected as the material components of an institution. This is, I think, the unforgivable sin of the Church.

Advent and Lent are the counterweight to all such temptations. They are categorical in their assertion of what we really are, and unconditional in their conviction of where we are going and where we truly belong. To be reassured constantly that one is “a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven” is the best news we can receive. It is the only good news there is or ever has been.

The Church is of no real use to us if she does not bring to bear upon the temporal the full weight of the eternal. She must bring us news from beyond of that other king and his kingdom, which is, because of him, truly our own as well. Nothing could corrupt the Church or us as her communicants more quick-

ly, more disastrously, more damnably than to subject her divine vocation to the all too apparent necessities of clamorous human need. What we really need is her divine self. Everything else, however fitting, is secondary. And so Advent and Lent are perpetual qualities of the Church's essential life, perennial seasons of our souls. Only by accident are they particular times in the Christian year. Together they supply the necessary biological and spiritual foundation of all we think and say and do.

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## THE SHADOWS REMEMBERED

THE RT. REV. HUGH MONTEFIORE

I always feel rather sorry for churches placed under the patronage of St. Stephen, because not many parishioners are going to turn out to celebrate his patronal festival on Boxing Day. The same could

be said about the whole string of celebrations in Christmas week, for those who worship on Christmas Day as well as the previous and succeeding Sundays are not likely to be diligent in other liturgical observances that week. Yet all these major festivals have been placed after Christmas for a purpose: St. John the Evangelist, because the theme of light and darkness which are so apposite at the turn of the year relate to the Christmas Gospel itself; the Holy Innocents because their massacre took place, according to St. Matthew, shortly after the nativity of Jesus; and St. Stephen because he was the protomartyr, and Simeon, according to St. Luke, warned Jesus' parents shortly after his birth that he would be the cause of the fall and rising again of many. And so, right after our celebration of the Incarnation, we are reminded of its shadow side: even if we walk in the light, we are surrounded by dark-

ness in which children will be hurt and people will have to forfeit their lives. The symbolism is vivid, and deserves to be heeded during a season renowned for self-indulgence. “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.” But there is plenty of darkness to overcome in the world.

*She struck the Angel Gabriel as hardly old enough to have a child at all, let alone this child, but he'd been entrusted with a message to give her and he gave it. He told her what the Child was to be named, and who He was to be, and something about the mystery that was to come upon her. “You mustn't be afraid, Mary,” he said. As he said it, he only hoped she wouldn't notice that beneath the great, golden wings he himself was trembling with fear to think that the whole future of creation hung now on the answer of a girl.*

— Dr. Frederick Buechner

## OVERWHELMED AND PROPERLY ALARMED: A REFLECTION ON THE INCARNATION IN THE AFTERMATH OF PULSE

THE REV. CAMERON NATIONS

“Was that about the shooting?” he asked me.

My mind spun for a moment, trying to connect the dots in my head between my sermon and some recent headlines.

“I suppose it could have been, yeah,” I replied, assuming that he meant the shooting of 22-year-old singer Christina Grimmie, whose murder had shocked the city of Orlando — our city — just two nights before. I started to mention her name and the parishioner cut me off.

“Not that shooting,” he said. “The other one. The one last night.”

I admitted with embarrassment that I did not know of the events he was describing. He told me I should look at the news and then bade me a good morning. I hurried into the sacristy to check my phone. Sure enough, there were the headlines: *Shooting at Orlando Night Club, Twenty Feared Dead.*

That morning, I had preached on Luke. The passage came from the 7th and 8th chapters of Luke, where we hear of the story of the woman who bursts into the Pharisee's dinner party with Jesus and then proceeds to anoint Jesus' feet with expensive perfume and wash them with her tears and hair. I had spoken about how inconvenient it can be when "real life" breaks into the order that we construct for ourselves and we are forced to confront the sorrow, pain, and suffering that often lies just below the surface of our lives.

Graham Kings, previously Bishop of Sherborne, in England, before being named Mission Theologian for the Anglican Communion, was set to preach the other two of our three morning liturgies that day. He had the difficult task of acknowledging as a guest preacher the tragedy of what we now simply call "Pulse," while still drawing in his points about mission and ministry throughout the Communion. By the time the 9:00 AM liturgy had concluded, the death toll had jumped even higher, and the injured numbered in the dozens. By the end of the 11:15 AM liturgy, the number of injured was said to be over one hundred, with somewhere around fifty people dead.

*The Worst Mass Shooting in Modern American History,* the headlines proclaimed.

So much of that day still feels so immediate. I will, for in-

stance, never forget a parishioner leaning close to me in the chancel of the church during Mass, asking me to pray for her husband, a cardiac surgeon at Orlando Regional Medical Center, because he had been called to the hospital a little before 4 AM, and had been operating on victims ever since. I will never forget how jarring it was to hear NPR cut from their usual Sunday programming to cover the events of the shooting, or to turn on the TV when I got home to find arial video feeds of a location mere miles from my own house broadcasted across all major networks. I will never forget the tears I shed that day. I will never forget that my wife was out of town visiting family, leaving me alone in the house with our two dogs to watch the news coverage. I did not even bother to change out of my collar after church, nor could I bring myself to get lunch.

I will also never forget joining my fellow clergy in the Diocese of Central Florida in prayer and remembrance in the days that followed. I will never forget walking from the Cathedral Church of St. Luke in downtown Orlando to the vigil a block away at Lake Eola Park with some of my colleagues, all dripping with sweat from wearing our cassocks, surplices, and stoles in the muggy Florida heat. I will never forget the many people, tears streaming down their faces, who approached me and threw their arms around me while murmuring through their sobs the words “thank you” as we cried together, praying prayers for our city too deep for words.

There was, in the midst of so much tragedy and pain, the glimmers of God’s grace and mercy breaking through. Those moments of grace brought to my mind the words of Rowan Williams. Last year,

Williams gave a lecture\* at St. Paul's Cathedral in London about keeping a Christian Christmas. In the course of his remarks, he addressed the mystery of the Incarnation by employing a rich analogy of a master craftsman "restoring an ancient and wonderful musical instrument":

*Looking at the old and damaged instrument, the craftsman might say, 'Well, I could repair this with a bit of synthetic material. A bit of composite here, and a bit of glue there. But it's not actually going to perform what it's capable of performing unless I work very hard with the grain of the wood, and replace what's worn out with the same material. Because that material is good. And it's that material which is capable of singing.' So God approaches our humanity. God doesn't say, 'With a bit of luck I might find some moral plastic substitute that will fill in the gaps.' God says, 'Humanity itself needs to*

*be inhabited and transfigured from within.'*

Our reaction to this transfiguration, Williams asserts, should be that we are "Overwhelmed by the nearness of God, and properly alarmed by the radical nature of the claim made."

Overwhelmed and properly alarmed, indeed.

It can be easy for us, as Christians, to conceive of God's salvific action in the world as a largely cosmic event – an epic battle for our souls waged between the forces of good and evil. This imagery can sometimes allow us to view salvation and redemption in abstraction as something beyond ourselves. Yet simply because God's grace comes to us unmerited does not mean that we are let off the hook. God's salvific action certainly does have cosmic

significance and scope, but it gets worked out by means of the most unassuming material: a baby, the flesh and blood of humankind. This nearness and immediacy should indeed overwhelm and alarm us, for it means that we too are intimately bound up in the work of God – not, as some argue, to enact God's hope for humanity as if he requires our assistance to bring about redemption, but rather as co-conspirators heralding the work of our leader as messengers and image-bearers of God's great goodness and grace calling to repentance and new life those desperate for the hope of Jesus Christ in a broken world.

Pulse taught me that even in the midst of a national tragedy, we possess the stuff necessary to herald this good news. Our material is good and capable of singing.

\* Video of Williams's talk can be found at this address: <https://goo.gl/6ecFBG>.

## GOD'S GREAT RESCUE OPERATION

THE REV. DR. GAWAIN DE LEEUW, OA

They'd left Bethlehem. Mary, Joseph, and the child Jesus, warned in a dream to emigrate to a safer territory, even the land where from where their fathers had fled generations before. As refugees, they were the lucky ones. The ones who remained would have their own children taken, the boys under two.

Perhaps in Nazareth, the family could begin again. They saw how the brutality of the world would make victims of their fellow Israelites. Perhaps Jesus would grow up knowing this, that he had been a refugee, a survivor, as he would begin his healing ministry.

We see glimpses of this same reality today. In Syria, first responders dig children from

the rubble after their city has been bombed. We see the face of war's brutality in the face of one shocked child, wiping blood and dust from his face, as he is placed in the back of an ambulance, the consequence of state violence upon the lives of the innocent.

Jesus would have been taught of the legacy of such violence. He would have heard stories about the Greek and Roman occupations. He understood the meaning of being trapped, of being a hostage to history, linked to generations of pain and suffering.

In a way, Jesus is much like a first responder, pulling people from the rubble, seeking to diminish the violence around us, negotiating to protect the innocent, inviting us to peace. I once celebrated a funeral for an officer who specialized in hostage negotiations – it was not the usual kind of police work. More often than hos-

tage situations, however, he would have to talk someone off a bridge, to convince them their life was worth living. His work required him to be steady, observant, and tenacious. He had to know when to speak, and when to listen. Sometimes, the work could take hours. With so many ways any of these situations could go wrong, so he had to keep a level head and a steady voice, and be able to make life and death decisions to try to save the people. In some ways, Jesus becomes that person for us – the one who ensures that all the people can be gathered, safe, under God's all-encompassing love.

We don't always know the kind of ledge we're on. We're often unaware of how our own lives are chained both to habits and conscious choices that keep us from living spiritually fulfilling lives. Our relationship with Jesus can be like a negotiation: 'let us have

these things, even though they keep causing us pain and heartache.'

But in spite of the precariousness of our position, Jesus will catch us when we fall. When he does, perhaps the things that had brought us to the ledge will seem unimportant and trivial. The fear that led us there will have been removed, and all that is before us is a new life in him. There need be no negotiation, but acceptance. We are here, in the aftermath of a brutal history, now liberated from the old gods and here with the new, revealed, redeemed.

Our society often seeks big, easy, and quick solutions to the messiness of our existence. Yet Jesus offers us a new life through a tiny child in a small corner of the ancient empire. Instead of seeking to flee our world, seduced by imperial promises, the bright lights of power and fame, we look

in the muck and the manger to see where our redemption lies.

To be rescued is terrifying. It's far easier to remain hostage to our cultural captivity, to be consumed by the baubles and trinkets that our culture deems valuable. We want everything, and more – more wealth, more attention, more facebook likes. But in the end, none of this will satisfy us – and then, when we finally realize how meaningless these diversions are, we find ourselves chained within a system we can't escape, unless we jump and give up everything. Once we've realized that we've been fed the sugary sweet promises of a poisonous culture, it's tempting to let our lives crash.

But Jesus is there. He invites us to follow him, knowing in him we have enough.

The negotiator has another role: to gather the people

who remain. We still see destruction all around us: the temple has been destroyed, and the people of Israel have been shattered. In spite of the rubble all around us, we begin to gather around this small sign of hope: God now in the world, God with us.

As Christians, we are ourselves survivors. We negotiate people away the ledge. As disciples, we catch people as they jump. And we pick people up out of the rubble. There will be a time for each. It requires eschewing easy solutions or political slogans, and instead responding to the love we have known through Jesus.

It may seem that the world is falling apart, but in this cradle is the beginning of humanity's awakening. You righteous and faithful, pay attention: God has prepared the way for us through a child, a survivor, the Stump of Jesse, through whom has grown the deepest

roots for a world that needs to hear his Word of Peace. In him, the wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together. Not through the temptations of grand theories or ideologies; not through the ephemeral trinkets of this world, but this: we have been brought from the ledge by a child. It is such a small event, it seems. And yet, it is everything.

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## NO ONE IS IRREDEEMABLE

THE MOST REV. DESMOND TUTU,  
ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS OF  
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Many of us can acknowledge that God cares about the world, but can't imagine that God would care about you or me individually. But our God marvelously, miracu-

lously cares about each and every one of us. The Bible has this incredible image of you, of me, of all of us — each one, held as something precious, fragile in the palms of God's hands.

But why, we ask in our disbelief and despair, would God care about me? The simple reason is that God loves you. God loves you as if you were the only person on earth. God, looking on us here, does not see us as a mass. God knows us each by name. God says: "Your name is engraved on the palms of my hands." You are so precious to God that the very hairs of your head are numbered.

Many people believe that they are beyond God's love — that God may love others, but that what they have done has caused God to stop loving them. But Jesus by his example showed us that God loves sinners as much as saints. Je-

sus associated with the scum of society. He scandalised the prim and proper people of his day, who believed that he was lowering his standards horribly badly. Now anyone could enter heaven.

Jesus would most probably have been seen in the red-light district of a city. Can you imagine if they saw me there, walking into a brothel to visit what are often called the women of easy virtue? Who would say: "We're quite sure the Archbishop is there for a pastoral reason"?

But that's exactly what Jesus did. Someone might look like a criminal or a drug addict, but these societal outcasts remain God's children, despite their desperate needs.

I saw the power of this Gospel when I was serving as chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in

South Africa. The Commission gave perpetrators of political crimes the opportunity to appeal for amnesty by telling the truth of their actions and an opportunity to ask for forgiveness; an opportunity that some took and others did not. The Commission also gave victims of political crimes an opportunity to unburden themselves from the pain and suffering they had experienced.

As we listened to accounts of truly monstrous deeds of torture and cruelty, it would have been easy to dismiss the perpetrators as monsters because their deeds were truly monstrous. But we are reminded that God's love is not cut off from anyone. However diabolical the act, it does not turn the perpetrator into a demon. When we proclaim that someone is sub-human, we not only remove for them the possibility of change and repentance, we also remove

from them moral responsibility.

We cannot condemn anyone as being irredeemable, as Jesus reminded us on the cross, crucified between two thieves. When one repented, Jesus promised him that he would be in paradise with him on that same day. Even the most notorious sinner and evildoer at the eleventh hour may repent and be forgiven, because our God is pre-eminently a God of grace.

Everything that we are, that we have, is a gift from God. He does not give up on you or on anyone, for God loves you now, and will always love you. Like a tireless and long-suffering parent, our God is there for us when we are ready to hear his still, small voice in our lives.

# DEATHS

◆ The Rev. Juan Maria Acosta, 74, in San Diego, CA. A native of La Colonia Morelos in Sonora, México, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1978, and served parishes in San Antonio, TX, and San Diego, CA.

◆ The Rev. Robert Hanna Beveridge, 84, in Seattle, WA. Ordained a priest in 1970, he served parishes in Sacramento, CA; Moscow, IA; Beaverton, OR; Arlington, VA; and Fayetteville, NY, as well as serving 20 years as a chaplain in the Army Rerves.

◆ The Rev. Robert Dean Campbell, 80, in Colorado Springs, CO. He served parishes in Bluff and Dragerton, UT; Invercargill and Ranfurly, New Zealand; Fort Vermilion, Alberta, Whitewood, Saskatchewan, and Osooyos, Canada; and Oroville, WA.

◆ The Rev. Canon Thomas Herbert Conley, 79, in Atlanta, GA. After many years as a Baptist minister, he became an Episcopalian in 1991, and was ordained to both the diaconate and the priesthood in 1995. He served several parishes in Georgia.

◆ The Rev. Malcolm Lysle Foster, 89, in New York, NY. He was Rector Emeritus of St. John's Episcopal Church, Southampton, NY.

◆ The Rev. John Michael Galagan, 87, in Tehachapi, CA. A graduate of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, he was ordained to both the diaconate and the priesthood in 1955. In addition to serving as chaplain to Soledad State Prison and Executive Director of Kern Hospice, he served parishes in Santa Clara, Gonzales, Bakersfield,

and Tehachapi, CA; Ritzville, Coulee Dam, and Vancouver, WA; Tigard and McMinnville, OR; and Riverton, WY.

◆ The Rev. Gene Moore-Haddock, 88, in Sherman, TX. A graduate of Nashotah House Theological Seminary in 1964, he served numerous parishes in Montana, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

◆ The Rev. Edgar Elmer Ince, Jr., 89, in Olive Branch, MS. After serving in the Army during the Second World War, he was ordained to the diaconate in 1962. He served as a deacon for 39 years, before being ordained to the priesthood in 2001. He served parishes in Memphis, LaGrange, Bolivar, Frayser, Mason, Somerville, and Macon, TN, as well as a church in Michigan City, MS.

◆ The Rev. Charles Glenn Kettlewell, 77, in Winchester, VA. A graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary, he

served parishes in Virginia, Arkansas, Michigan, Florida, Maryland, and North Carolina.

◆ The Rev. Charles Ernest McIntyre, III, 92, in Odessa, TX. After Army service in both the Second World War and the Korean War, he was active in business while he read for holy orders. He was ordained to the diaconate in 1958. He graduated from the School of Theology at The University of the South, and was ordained to the priesthood, in 1975. He served parishes in El Paso, Odessa, Vernon, Quanah, and Burnet, TX, and Sewanee, TN.

◆ The Rev. Pauline Taitt Perry, 90, in Worcester, MA. After 23 years as a teacher, she graduated from Seabury Western Theological Seminary, and was ordained to the diaconate in 1992. She served as a hospital chaplain, as well as serving several parishes in Worcester and Holden, MA.

◆ The Rev. Gordon Rick Plowe, 85, in Mitchell, SD. Interspersed with years devoted to farming, he graduated from Church Divinity School of the Pacific, was ordained to the priesthood, and served parishes in Martin and Mitchell, SD, as well as on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation; Minot, ND, as well as on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation; and Moravia and Homer, NY, as well as working for the national Church in New York City.

◆ The Rev. Robert Rybicki, 65, in San Francisco, CA. Ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1977, he later joined the staff of Church Divinity School of the Pacific before being received as an Episcopal priest in late 2014.

◆ The Rev. Canon Cecil Alvin Scantlebury, 84, in White Plains, NY. A graduate of Codrington College, Barbados, he was ordained to the

priesthood in 1955. He served parishes in Georgetown, Guyana; and New York City and White Plains, NY.

◆ The Rev. Richard Frank Simmonds, 84, in Fairbanks, AK. A graduate of Berkeley Divinity School at Yale, he was ordained to both the diaconate and the priesthood in 1956. He served parishes in Minto, Fairbanks, Beaver, Stevens Village, Tanacross, and Kenai, AK, and in New York, as well as serving as a chaplain with the Army.

◆ The Rev. Harold David Sox, 80, in Palm Springs, CA. A graduate of Virginia Episcopal Seminary, he was ordained a priest in 1961. He served a parish in Upper Mount Clair, NJ, followed by school chaplaincies in Michigan, New York, and California; he then taught in London for many years, in addition to assisting at multiple parishes in the UK.

◆ The Rev. Warren Frederick Spanutius, 88, in Corpus Christi, TX. He was ordained to the diaconate in 1967, and the priesthood in 1974. In addition to his years working as an electrical engineer, he served many parishes in Texas as a supply and interim priest.

◆ The Rev. Arthur James Spencer, Jr., 89, in Hobe Sound, FL. He served in the Navy during the Second World War. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1988, and served St. Monica's, Stuart, FL for twenty years.

◆ The Rev. Robert Leroy Thomas, 91, in Ellicott City, MD. He served in the Navy during the Second World War. A graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary, he was ordained to the diaconate in 1950, and the priesthood in 1951. He served parishes in Virginia, West Virginia, and Ohio.

◆ The Rev. Robert Geddes Willoughby, 80, in Clinton Township, MI. He served parishes in St. Clair Shores, Detroit, Saginaw, Brooklyn, and Rochester, MI.

◆ *May they rest in peace, and rise in glory.* ◆

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### *Advent Prayer*

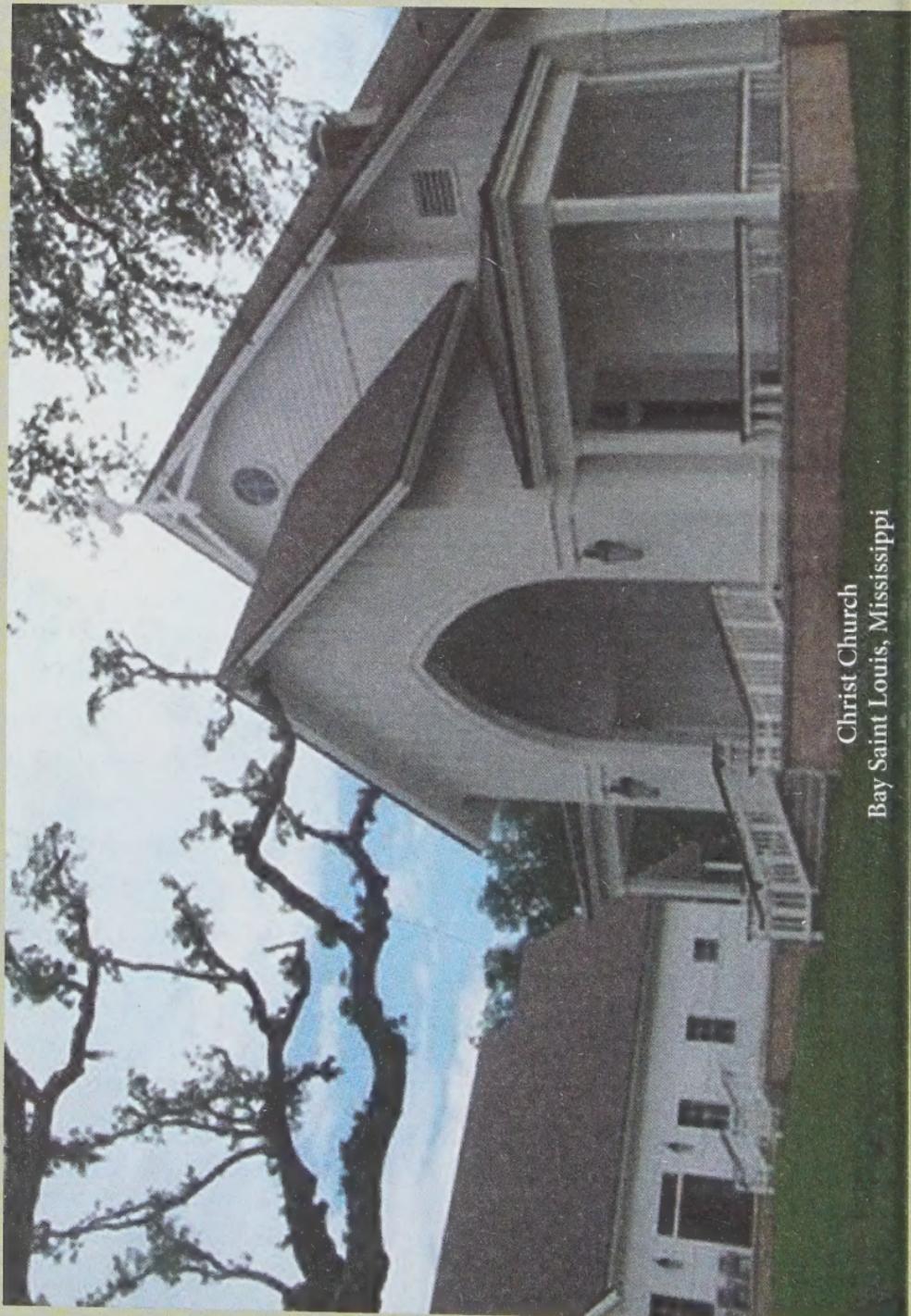
*Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas. We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day. We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us. We who are blessed in no many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom. We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence. We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light. To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.*

— Henri J. M. Nouwen

# Wast Will ....(and).... Testament

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